1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
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CHAPTER VI

WORK

IT is obvious that the type of economic structure is related in some degree to the environment which, while it may not act as a determining factor, is a limiting condition. The general appearance and topography of the island have already been described in the introductory chapter. Here it is necessary only to emphasize the resources.

RESOURCES

Both the land and the sea provide the means of livelihood. In the dense bush are hunted wild pigs which are used for immediate consumption, or domesticated and eaten at some future time. Parts of the same bush ground are cleared for the gardens. The principal crop is taro, but yams are also cultivated to some extent. Banana trees are planted in large numbers, as are also the pawpaw trees. Pineapple trees have been introduced, but are not grown extensively. Coconut trees, while not planted in the gardens, are found wild everywhere. Betel-nuts, the south-sea almond, a species of apple, sugar-cane, dates, and bread-fruit may also be found in a wild state throughout the bush. Along the banks of the rivers are the sago palms, the fruit of which is highly valued. A species of tobacco is also grown and is much in demand by the ever-smoking natives.

From the bush also comes the material for building houses. Palm, bamboo, and hardwood trees are all at the disposal of the native when he builds his shelter. The material for drums, *malanggans*, canoes, fishing-nets, etc., comes from the same place, as do also the dyes and paints which colour the elaborate *malanggans* and dancing-masks and sometimes

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433 the face. Brightly coloured birds give their plumage for headdresses, but are not considered as food. Snakes used [262] to be eaten, but to-day are not used as food.[1] There is a species of phalanger which is occasionally eaten and whose teeth are used for necklaces. The wild pig is highly valued as food, and it or its domesticated brother is necessary for a big feast. So to the native the bush is not only a dark, mysterious place, peopled with his doubles, the *gas*, and occasionally with ghosts, or the place where he goes for his extra-marital intercourse, but it is primarily a very intimate and essential part of his world, from which he gets many of the necessary resources both for his everyday and ritual life. That the bush could give him much more does not occur to him. The paucity of his material culture and diet, compared to other Oceanic peoples in a similar environment, merely indicates that the New Irelander has not made full use of the natural resources at hand.

433 The sea, too, he views from its practical aspects. Out of it come the fish which are an important part of his food 262 supply. On the reefs are the crabs and shellfish which form a welcome variation in the diet. The turtle is a rarer delicacy, and has two uses: its internal organs are highly prized as a food, and from its shell is made the design on the breast ornament (*kepkep*) and fish-hooks. The shark provides an exciting occupation and an occasional variation in diet. Once a year there emerges from the sea a special worm, the *beta*, the catching of which is a ritual occasion, and it, too, is a welcome delicacy. The water from the sea, filtered somewhat as it bubbles up through a hole on the sandy beach, is, with the fresh coconut milk, the only other drink the natives have.

515 The sea to the native is not only the source of part of his food, but is his bath-tub and finger-bowl as well. When he

[1] The missions have said that the snake is evil, because of its actions in the original garden of Paradise, and so it is not to be eaten.